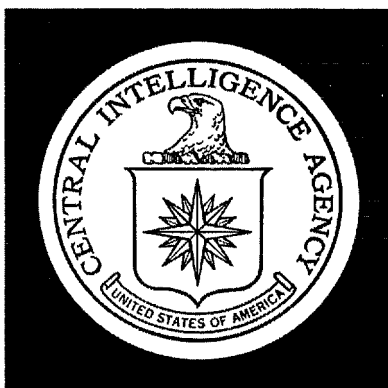


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MEMORANDUM

Special Assessments on the Middle East Situation

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12 June 1967

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
12 June 1967

NASIR'S SITUATION AND POSITION AMONG THE ARAB LEADERS

1. The wide-scale and largely spontaneous demands in Egypt that Nasir continue in office have demonstrated that no early replacement of Nasir is likely. Nasir probably counted on getting a favorable reaction to his resignation, though he may have been prepared to step down if sentiment ran against him. While he is unlikely to be thrown out of office, there is some question as to the extent of his power. He may be forced to take advice from top associates, and the wholesale changes in the military command are probably designed at least in part to head off unrest among the officers over the debacle.

2. It would be the sheerest speculation to estimate Nasir's chances for survival over the long term until some clear idea of the dimensions of a peace settlement can be formed. At most, we can say that he probably will not be able to convert this debacle into a smashing victory as he did in 1956. As the extent of Egypt's humiliation becomes known, resentment against him is likely to grow. It is unlikely that any group seeking to oust Nasir would try to do so at a time when it would appear to be capitalizing on Israeli successes, for it would be highly vulnerable to charges of being "agents of imperialism." In the long run, disillusion over Nasir's performance will probably manifest itself in greater discontent within Egypt than he has hitherto faced and in time this might lead to a coup. But, for some time, the immediate traumatic effects of the defeat impel the Egyptians to stick with Nasir and seek other scapegoats.

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4. The state of Nasir's relations with his fellow Arabs varies. His prestige has suffered greatly with the Arab governments. Yet, as demonstrations in dozens of cities testify, he still enjoys wide public popularity. A very large number of people accept the story that Israel could only have crushed Egypt with the assistance of the US and UK. Nasir has succeeded in associating many others with him in defeat, and this tends to mute expressions of discontent. He is trying to reassert leadership through the mechanism of the summit meeting of Arab chiefs of state. But it is an indication of his weakened position that he feels it necessary to have another leader associated with him in calling for such a meeting.

5. Even in defeat, Nasir is unwilling to drop all old quarrels; he remains on bad terms with King Faysal of Saudi Arabia. The Egyptian leader failed to mention Saudi Arabia among those states which "adopted honorable attitudes" in the crisis, though the latter sent troops to Jordan and stopped oil shipments to the US and UK

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6. Jordan's Husayn has a good public image as a loyal colleague of Nasir who fought bravely and whose defeat was no worse than Egypt's.

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The other monarchies have made gestures of support--stopping oil shipments, sending small numbers of troops. The monarchs generally, as well as Tunisia's Bourguiba, are pleased that Nasir has been defeated. They share the general Arab shame and bitterness at Israel, however, for having inflicted such a defeat. While all the Arab conservatives would feel obliged publicly to associate themselves with Nasir's moves against Israel, they would probably be far more reluctant to follow Nasir's lead in adopting measures against Western powers, e.g., nationalizing oil, which would seriously harm their interests.

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12 June 1967

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7. Of the revolutionary states, Algeria is disgusted at the humiliating collapse of the UAR Army.

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The Algerians are suspicious of Nasir's abilities and probably are unwilling to help restore Nasir's prestige among the Arabs. Boumediene's current trip to Moscow may indicate an intention to upstage Nasir. Syria, berated last week by Cairo and Amman for failing to join vigorously in the fight, has regained some stature and sympathy in Cairo as a result of its 9 and 10 June fighting with the Israelis. We know little of the present situation in Damascus; the leadership is probably badly shaken. There was serious infighting among regime leaders prior to hostilities, and changes at the top are likely. The attitudes of such an altered regime to Nasir are not predictable at this time.

8. In the past year, Iraq had evolved a position of balance between Cairo and other Middle Eastern capitals. It participated in a joint political leadership with Egypt, but sought better relations with Iran and Turkey. Radical sentiment has risen in the present situation; a number of pro-Nasir politicians have been released from detention. Despite the UAR's defeat, it is likely to have a fair amount of influence in Baghdad in coming months, although Iraqi moderation is likely to reassert itself in time.

9. Until armistice arrangements have been worked out, the Arabs will feel considerable pressure to stay together. The emotions wrought by the conflict will encourage this sense of solidarity. However, a number of the Arab states--particularly the oil exporters--realize that their interests are not served by taking anti-Western positions. Hence

12 June 1967

the disposition of these states to follow Nasir's lead will be limited. In sum, there will probably be a large measure of solidarity in opposing Israel and rather less in supporting Nasir.

12 June 1967

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